

**“The Centerpiece” (one page class requirement) submitted by Faber McMullen for Professor Malcolm Yarnell, Professor of Systematic Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary – May 27, 2015**

It is amazing to think that two thousand years have past and there are still so many opinions regarding the atonement. Dr. Yarnell failed to point out one possible explanation for this deficiency. It has to do with the deficiency of human linguistics.

I believe that the vocabulary does not exist in any human language to describe the reason why a perfect Deity had to "deal" with sin in order to reconcile the human part of creation to himself. Furthermore, the language is lacking and insufficient to explain how and why this deity used Himself to "deal" with sin.

God's essence includes the attributes of perfect love, perfect justice, and perfect righteousness. The Old Testament scriptures looked forward, projecting an imperfect system of dealing with sin. These were a shadow of the reality of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection. The Old Testament scriptures speak to the nature of this divine deal being in the character of a sacrificial offering.

*5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.  
6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:5-6)*

This prophecy is echoed in the New Testament where we read, "He that knew know sin was made sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21) Romans 5:8 reminds the reader that "God commended his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Hence, we see forthwith the penal-substitutionary nature of the atonement. We were sinners. Payment was required. And God in his infinite mercy, substituted himself in our place.

Hence, the substitutionary nature of Christ dying for us is explicit and without question, and is the centerpiece upon which any discussion of the atonement must center. Scripture furthermore tells us that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and that the penalty for that sin is death. (Romans 6:23) These verses are of course stepping stones in the familiar presentation of the Gospel known as "The Romans Road".

Dr. Yarnell points out that the atonement is about substitution. It is about payment. It is about redemption. It is about ransom. It is about chastisement. I would summarize that it is ultimately is about perfect righteousness demanding perfect justice, and this being satisfied by an act of perfect love. In the end, mankind cannot define this act anymore than an ant can define the internet. I believe it was not necessary so that a

holy God could come into our presence, but because without it, sinful man could not stand in the presence of a Holy God without being consumed.